NUMB. XLII.

The SPECTATOR.

Garganum mugire putes nemus aut mare Thuſcum,
Tanto cum ſtrepitu ludi ſpectantur, & artes,
Divitiæque peregrinæ; quibus oblitus actor
Cum ſtetit in Scena, concurrit dextera lævæ.
Dixit adhuc aliquid? Nil ſane. Quid placet ergo?
Lana Tarentino violas imitata veneno. Hor.

Wedneſday, April 18. 1711.

ARiſtotle has obſerv'd, that ordinary Writers in Tragedy endeavour to raiſe Terrour and Pity in their Audience, not by proper Sentiments and Expreſſions, but by the Dreſs and Decorations of the Stage. There is ſomething of this Kind very ridiculous in the *Engliſh* Theatre. When the Author has a Mind to terrify us, it thunders; when he would make us melancholy, the Stage is darken'd. But among all our tragick Artifices, I am the moſt offended at thoſe which are made uſe of to inſpire us with magnificent Ideas of the Perſons that ſpeak. The ordinary Method of making an Heroe, is to clap a huge Plume of Feathers upon his Head, which riſes ſo very high, that there is often a greater Length from his Chin to the Top of his Head, than to the Sole of his Foot. One would believe, that we thought a great Man and a tall Man the ſame thing. This very much embarraſſes the Actor, who is forced to hold his Neck extremely ſtiff and ſteady all the while he ſpeaks; and notwithſtanding any Anxieties which he pretends for his Miſtreſs, his Country, or his Friends, one may ſee by his Action, that his greateſt Care and Concern is to keep the Plume of Feathers from falling off his Head. For my own Part, when I ſee a Man uttering his Complaints under ſuch a Mountain of Feathers, I am apt to look upon him rather as an unfortunate Lunatick, than a diſtreſs'd Heroe. As theſe ſuperfluous Ornaments upon the Head make a great Man, a Princeſs generally receives her Grandeur from thoſe additional Incumbrances that fall into her Tail: I mean the broad ſweeping Train that follows her in all her Motions, and finds conſtant Employment for a Boy who ſtands behind her to open and ſpread it to Advantage. I do not know how others are affected at this Sight, but, I muſt confeſs, my Eyes are wholly taken up with the Page's Part; and as for the Queen, I am not ſo attentive to any thing ſhe ſpeaks, as to the right adjuſting of her Train, leſt it ſhould chance to trip up her Heels, or incommode her, as ſhe walks to and fro upon the Stage. It is, in my Opinion, a very odd Spectacle, to ſee a Queen venting her Paſſion in a diſordered Motion, and a little Boy taking Care all the while that they do not ruffle the Tail of her Gown. The Parts that the two Perſons act on the Stage at the ſame Time, are very different: The Princeſs is afraid leſt ſhe ſhould incur the Diſpleaſure of the King her Father, or loſe the Heroe her Lover, whilſt her Attendant is only concern'd leſt ſhe ſhould entangle her Feet in her Petticoat.

We are told, that an ancient tragick Poet, to move the Pity of his Audience for his exiled Kings and diſtreſſed Heroes, uſed to make the Actors repreſent them in Dreſſes and Cloaths that were thread-bare and decay'd. This Artifice for moving Pity, ſeems as ill contriv'd, as that we have been ſpeaking of to inſpire us with a great Idea of the Perſons introduc'd upon the Stage. In ſhort, I would have our Conceptions rais'd by the Dignity of Thought and Sublimity of Expreſſion, rather than by a Train of Robes or a Plume of Feathers.

Another mechanical Method of making great Men, and adding Dignity to Kings and Queens, is to accompany them with Halberts and Battle-axes. Two or three Shifters of Scenes, with the two Candle-Snuffers, make up a compleat Body of Guards upon the *Engliſh* Stage; and by the Addition of a few Porters dreſs'd in red Coats, can repreſent above a dozen Legions. I have ſometimes ſeen a Couple of Armies drawn up together upon the Stage, when the

the Poet has been disposed to do Honour to his Generals. It is impossible for the Reader's Imagination to multiply twenty Men into such prodigious Multitudes, or to fancy that two or three hundred thousand Soldiers are fighting in a Room of forty or fifty Yards in Compass. Incidents of such a Nature should be told, not represented.

——— *Non tamen intus*
Digna geri promes in scenam: multaque tolles
Ex oculis, quæ mox narret facundia præsens. Hor.

—Yet there are things improper for a Scene,
Which Men of Judgment only will relate. L. *Roscom.*

I should therefore, in this Particular, recommend to my Countrymen the Example of the *French* Stage, where the Kings and Queens always appear unattended, and leave their Guards behind the Scenes. I should likewise be glad if we imitated the *French* in banishing from our Stage the Noise of Drums, Trumpets, and Huzzas; which is sometimes so very great, that when there is a Battle in the *Hay-Market* Theatre, one may hear it as far as *Charing-Cross*.

I have here only touched upon those Particulars which are made use of to raise and aggrandize the Persons of a Tragedy; and shall shew in another Paper the several Expedients which are practiced by Authors of a vulgar Genius to move Terrour, Pity, or Admiration, in their Hearers.

The Taylor and the Painter often contribute to the Success of a Tragedy more than the Poet. Scenes affect ordinary Minds as much as Speeches; and our Actors are very sensible, that a well-dress'd Play has sometimes brought them as full Audiences, as a well-written one. The *Italians* have a very good Phrase to express this Art of imposing upon the Spectators by Appearances: They call it the *Fourberia della Scena, The Knavery or trickish Part of the Drama.* But however the Show and Outside of the Tragedy may work upon the Vulgar, the more understanding Part of the Audience immediately see through it and despise it.

A good Poet will give the Reader a more lively Idea of an Army or a Battle in a Description, than if he actually saw them drawn up in Squadrons and Battallions, or engaged in the Confusion of a Fight. Our Minds should be open'd to great Conceptions and inflamed with glorious Sentiments by what the Actor speaks, more than by what he appears: Can all the Trappings or Equipage of a King or Hero, give *Brutus* half that Pomp and Majesty which he receives from a few Lines in *Shakespear*?

At the Desire of several Ladies of Quality.
For the Benefit of Mrs. PORTER.
By Her Majesty's Company of Comedians.

AT the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane, to Morrow, being Thursday the 19th of April, will be presented, a Comedy call'd, Love's last Shift; or, The Fool in Fashion. The Part of Sir Novelty by Mr. Cibber, Sir Wm Wiseworld Mr. Johnson, Loveless Mr. Wilks, Worthy Mr. Mills, Snap Mr. Pinkethman, Sly Mr. Bullock, Amanda Mrs. Porter, Narcissa Mrs. Oldfield, Hillaria Mrs. Bicknell. And on Friday next will be presented a Comedy, call'd, The Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter: For the Benefit of Mrs. Rogers.

N.B. Advertisements for Plays will be continued, from time to time, in this Paper.

This Play is sold by Jacob Tonson, at Shakespear's Head over against Catharine-Street in the Strand.

At the Request of several Persons of Quality, who have appointed to be at the famous Water-Theatre of the late ingenious Mr. Winstanly, this present Week and the Week following, it will continue to be shewn a Fortnight longer. There is the greatest Curiosities in Water-works, the like was never perform'd before by any. It is shewn for the Benefit of his Widow every Evening between 4 and 5 of the Clock. With several new Additions made this Spring. Boxes 2 s. 6 d. Pit 1 s. 6 d. First Gallery 1 s. Upper Gallery 6 d. It is at the lower End of Pickadilly, and is known by the Wind-mill on the Top of it.

An excellent Collection of Pictures never before expos'd to Sale, will be sold by Auction this Day the 18th Instant at 10 a Clock precisely, at Mr. Bretlan's at the 2 Flower-Pots in Sumerset-yard in the Strand; and at the same time will be expos'd to Sale by Auction, 2 extraordinary good Ruckers Harpsicords of Antwerp, each of them 2 Setts of Keys, approv'd of by the best Masters in England. The Pictures and Harpsicords may be view'd till the Time of Sale, where Catalogues may be had.

Just Publish'd,

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